

REMARKS

Claims 1-30 remain for reconsideration.

Minor amendments have been made to claims 25 and 26 to avoid antecedent issues. Namely, from the previous amendment it was noted that not all occurrences of the word “application” were deleted or changed to “system”. Amendments herein correct that oversight.

The amendments introduced herein are believed proper under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116 as they do not introduce any new features which would require a further search and are believed to put the claims in condition for allowance or in better form for appeal. As such, entry of the amendment is respectfully solicited.

The prior art rejections are summarized as follows:

1. Claims 1-4, 10, 12-14, 17-19, and 21 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 5,625,407 to Biggs in view of U.S. Patent 6,783,343 to Shaffer;

2. Claims 25-27 and 29-30 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 6,731,609 to Hirni in view of Shaffer;

3. Claims 5-8, 11, 15-16, 20, and 22-24 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) in view of Biggs and Hirni and Shaffer;

4. Claim 9 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Biggs and Shaffer and U.S. Patent 5,566,171 to Levinson;

5. Claim 28 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hirni and Shaffer and U.S. Patent 5,859,979 to Tung.

All prior art rejections appear to be the same as in the previous Office Action, with the additional reliance on Shaffer for each of the rejections. Again, even in view of the teachings of Shaffer, these rejections are respectfully traversed based on the following discussion.

Briefly, embodiments of the present invention are directed to multipoint conferencing. As explained for example with reference to Figure 1A, prior art systems typically use a Multipoint Control Unit (MCU) 104 to coordinate between the various participants in the conference. As shown in Figure 1A, all signaling and connections may be routed through the MCU in a centralized system or, as shown in Figure 1B, in a decentralized system, a Multipoint Controller (MC) 108 is still used to serve a centralized signaling controller.

Embodiments of the present invention seek to eliminate the use of the MCU 104 and the MC 108. As stated in paragraph [0011] of the disclosure,

embodiments of the invention involve a signaling process for setting up a distributed multipoint conference among three or more endpoints without requiring centralized control either for signaling or for mixing media streams.

As stated in paragraph [0018], the absence of the MCU or MC further may tend to reduce communication latency because communicating directly among the conference participants, rather than through a central entity, may minimize the number of network “hops” required to collect, mix and redistribute the media streams.

The independent claim have been amended to recite that the participants communication “directly” with one another. That is, without the use of the MCU or MC.

With regard to the references to Biggs, Hirni, Levinson and Tung, these references were previously discussed and distinguished in response to the last Office Action. In short, it was demonstrated that, unlike the present invention, these references used some centralized device or controller to control and coordinate communication between the various clients. These references are not again herein discussed to avoid repetition. However, the previous discussion of these references is herein incorporated by reference for completeness of response.

In the present Office Action, the Examiner has further relied on Shaffer

to allegedly teach “direct signaling” between the clients. In particular, the examiner points to, among other places, column 2, lines 14-20 as teaching “...*providing the network with the ability to sustain is a gatekeeper fails and in that the signaling is to be handled through the direct signaling*”.

However, this is not the same as the present invention. Shaffer, like the rest, relies on a centralized device to control communications between the clients. As shown in Figure 1 of Shaffer, there is a MCU 104 in addition to two “gatekeepers” 108a and 108b. As shown in Figure 5 (also on face of patent), two centralized redundant “gatekeepers” are used. As indicated by the Xed out lines, if gate keeper 108a fails, control is switched to gatekeeper 108b. The “direct signaling” to which the Examiner refers is only used temporarily to keep from loosing the connection during a primary gatekeeper failure before switching control to the redundant gatekeeper. The Examiner took his above quote out of context. As taught on column 2, lines 14-20:

“If the gatekeeper fails, the media channel(s) is maintained, and the redundancy supervisory layers know that signaling is to be handled through the direct signaling and call control channels. The client terminal's user interface may "black out" (prohibit the invocation of) features which are not available when in direct signaling mode” (emphasis added).

Thus, during “direct signaling” there is a blackout period and conferencing would be stymied until another centralized controller (i.e. redundant gatekeeper) took control. This is unrelated to the present invention which avoids the use of a centralized controller.

As previously amended, claim 1 recites “A method for setting up a distributed multipoint conference among three or more endpoints without requiring centralized control either for signaling or for mixing media streams comprising: ...the third endpoint directly establishing a connection between itself the one or more other participating endpoints identified by the requesting endpoint, the third endpoint identifying the requesting endpoint to the one or more other participating endpoints” (emphasis added).

Independent claim 12 recites “A method of facilitating a multipoint conference among three or more endpoints, the method comprising: directly sending to each of the other participating endpoints identified by the requesting endpoint an invitation to establish a connection and information identifying the requesting endpoint” (emphasis added).

Independent claim 21 (and similarly claim 25) recites “directly receive from an requesting endpoint information comprising an invitation to establish a connection with the requesting endpoint and identifying one or more other endpoints participating in a conference with the requesting endpoint; directly establish a connection with the requesting endpoint; directly send to each of

the other endpoints identified by the requesting endpoint an invitation to establish a connection and information identifying the requesting endpoint; directly receive from each of the other endpoints information establishing a connection; and mix a plurality of unicast streams received from the inviting and other endpoints to form a logical conference” (emphasis added).

The above features recited in the claims are not taught or suggested by the prior art of record even with the inclusion of Shaffer. As such, it is respectfully requested that the outstanding rejections be withdrawn.

In view of the foregoing, it requested that the application be reconsidered, that claims 1-30 be allowed and that the application be passed to issue. Please charge any shortages and credit any overcharges to Intel's Deposit Account number 50-0221.


Respectfully submitted,

Date: December 19, 2005

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I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450 Alexandria, VA 22313-1450	
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